

March 29, 1961

Dr. Wilbur J. Cohen
Assistant Secretary-designate
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C.

Dear Wilbur:

Thank you very much for the summary of the Appropriations Committee Highlights for the meeting of March 14. Since I had an opportunity which I did not exploit as much as I should have to press my views on the report of the Task Force, I have to be a little diffident about my remarks now. But I hope you will not mind that I communicate them to you for whatever appreciation you wish to afford them.

As we discussed over the telephone, I am disappointed at the weakness of the request for funds for medical research as formulated in the Task Force report. It is not obvious to me that the Hearing testimony brought out the essential point that increase in funds was indeed needed but that one of the most useful ways in which they could be administered was to increase the overhead allowance to the schools. I am also puzzled by the first paragraph under "Special Task Force Recommendations" with reference to the need for training outside of NIH. Perhaps this has been distorted in preparing the Summary. If what was meant that a more basic and general approach is required for the problem of the universities and higher education, I would certainly agree but I think it would be quite dangerous to use this as a principal argument for the reduction of expenditures within the framework of the NIH.

The most disappointing thing in the Summary is the last paragraph on page 4 with its implication that the program for medical research facilities construction will continue to be on the same matching basis as it has been in past years. I believe that the consensus of the Task Force and certainly of my colleagues here, is that this is the one area where a substantial increase in Federal support is most vital for the vigor of our health research programs.

I am well aware of the diverse interests that you have to reconcile and the need to make practical compromises to obtain real progress in any direction. However, I am sure you would not have sent me this material

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without wanting my candid reactions to its details.

I am sorry to see that the "Designate" is still in your title and hope you will be clearing this up very soon so that you can get down to business on the vital problems you are tackling. You know that you have my full support on the basic issues.

With best personal wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics